Metro-North Railroad

U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration

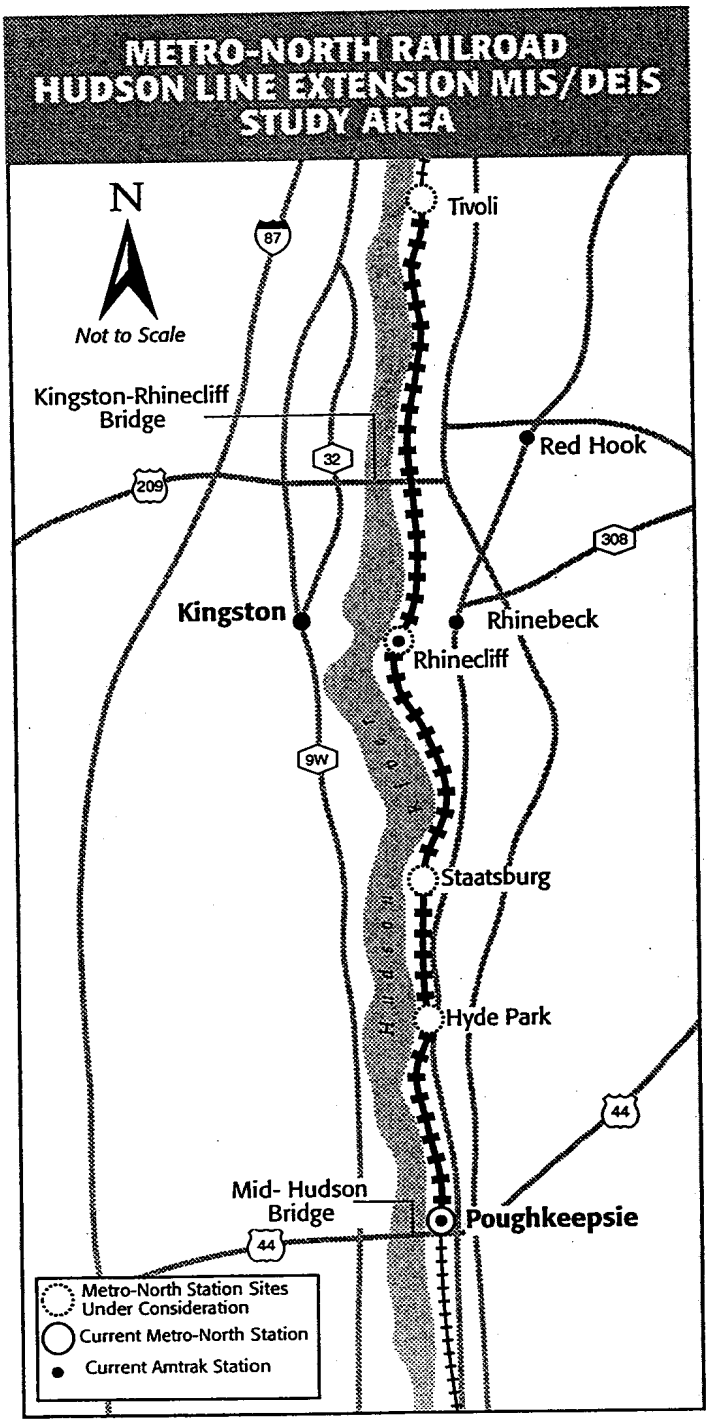
Hudson Line Extension MIS/DEIS Scoping Information Booklet

JUNE 1999

Introduction

MTA Metro-North Railroad ("Metro-North") is conducting a study to explore the potential social, economic and environmental impacts associated with extending its Hudson Line service northward within Dutchess County from its current terminus at Poughkeepsie, New York, to a new terminus at Rhinecliff or Tivoli, New York (approximately 15 and 25 miles respectively from Poughkeepsie). The preliminary proposal includes construction of three or four stations and parking facilities. Sites presently under consideration include Hyde Park, Staatsburg, Rhinecliff and Tivoli. Construction of a train storage yard, an equipment maintenance area, and an employee base facility are also being examined. The utilization of satellite park and ride facilities with connecting shuttle bus service for station access will also be explored. The proposed 15 to 25 mile extension would expand mobility for the region's growing workforce and has the potential to provide economic benefits to communities along the rail alignment.

The proposed study corridor extends approximately 25 miles in length from the City of Poughkeepsie north to the Village of Tivoli in the Town of Red Hook, Dutchess County, New York. Rail right-of-way and tracks, owned by CSX, currently exist along the 25 mile corridor paralleling the Hudson River from the Poughkeepsie train station and passing through the Towns of Poughkeepsie, Hyde Park, Rhinebeck and Red Hook and the Village of Tivoli. This study corridor will include other areas such as locations for satellite parking facilities. The study, a Major Investment Study/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (MIS/DEIS), will identify and examine likely environmental, social and economic impacts, costs, and benefits of all reasonable alternatives in the study corridor.



The purpose of this scoping information booklet is to introduce the study and invite interested citizens and agency officials to participate in the "scoping" process. The scoping process provides an opportunity for the public to participate in the development of reasonable alternatives and identify potential issues or impacts associated with the alternatives. As part of the scoping process, Metro-North will host public scoping meetings, in cooperation with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Scoping is the first phase of public involvement in the Hudson Line Extension MIS/DEIS.

Purpose and Need

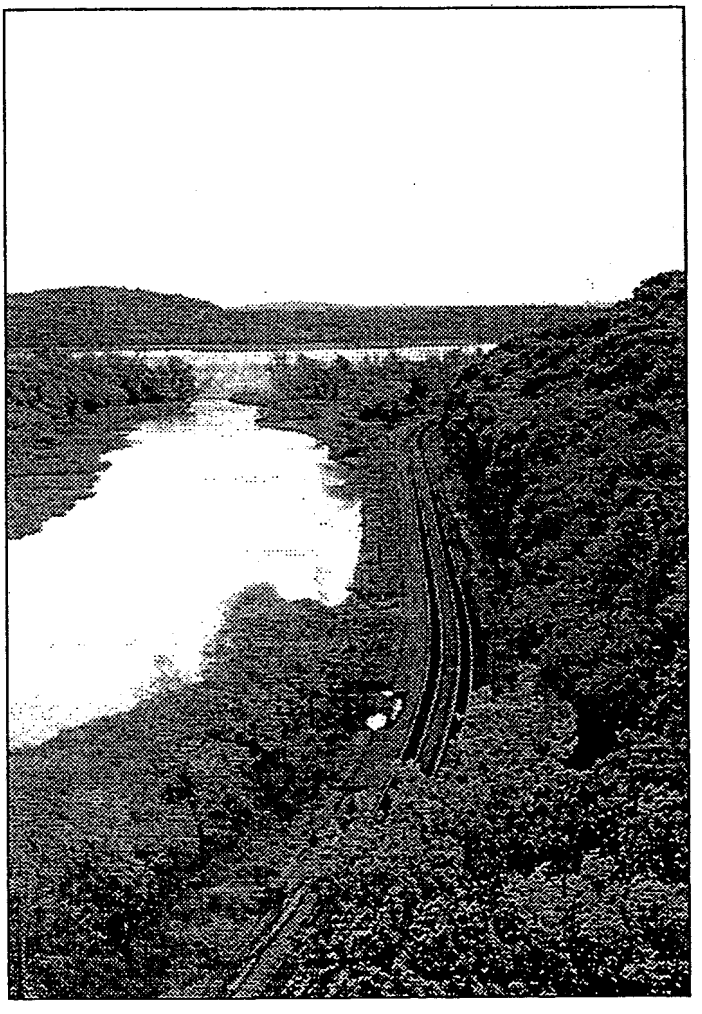
The development of the purpose and need is critical in determining the range of alternatives to be analyzed in an MIS/DEIS. A clear definition of need will be an important component of this study. Initial needs identified for this study include: 1) provide expanded regional access and plan for increasing service demand; 2) improve Metro-North's operating efficiency; 3) complement local economic development; and 4) reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality. These study needs are discussed below.

Need: Provide Expanded Regional Access and Plan for Increasing Service Demands

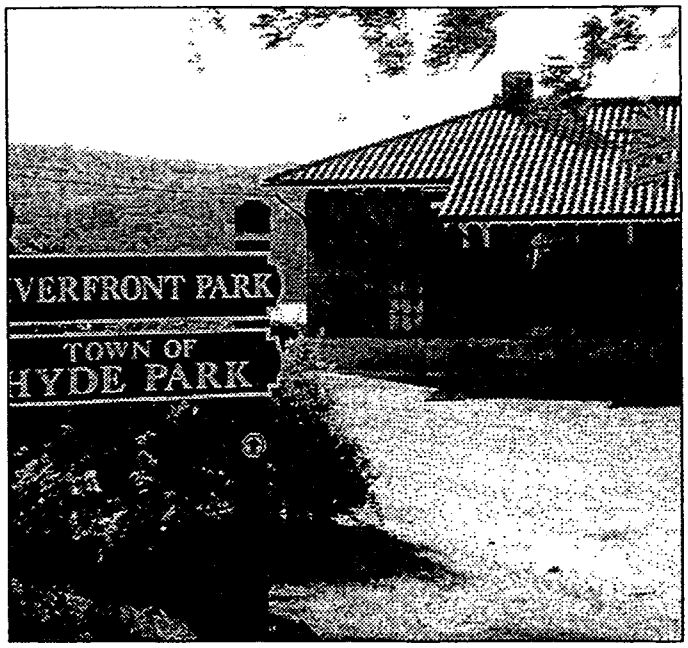
According to the Dutchess County Forecasting Project (1996), in 1995, the population of Dutchess County was 262,000. Between 1990 and 1995 the County's population grew 1.0% (from 259,500 to 262,000) while the combined populations of northern Dutchess County towns and villages (defined as the Towns of Clinton, Hyde Park, Milan, Pleasant Valley, Rhinebeck, Red Hook and Stanford, and the villages of Rhinebeck, Red Hook and Tivoli) grew 1.5% (from 55,600 to 56,400).

Between 1990 and 2020, under the Forecasting Project moderate growth scenario, the population of Dutchess County is expected to increase by 21% (from 259,000 to approximately 314,000). By comparison, the population of northern Dutchess towns and villages is projected to grow 18% (from 55,600 to 65,400) between 1990 and 2020. Many towns along the study corridor are projected to see dramatic population growth. Increasing population means increased transportation demand. With no major highway expansions planned along the Hudson Line study corridor, growing numbers of travelers will turn to rail transit as a viable alternative mode of travel.

Ridership on the Upper Hudson segment of Metro-North Railroad's Hudson Line (encompassing the stations at Cortlandt, Peekskill, Garrison, Cold Spring, Beacon, New Hamburg, and Poughkeepsie) has been growing steadily since 1984. Over the last 15 years, ridership has grown approximately 7% per year, to 3.2 million trips per year. Through the year 2010, Metro-North expects ridership on the Upper Hudson segment to grow by 2.4% per year, with peak ridership growing 2.2% per year, off-peak ridership growing 2.2% per year, and weekend ridership growing 3.0% per year. Much of the growth in rail ridership is anticipated to come from areas which are not presently served by Metro-North. Approximately 30% of riders currently boarding at the Poughkeepsie Station drive twenty minutes or more to reach the Poughkeepsie Station from areas north and west of the station, according to the Poughkeepsie Station Parking Improvements Environmental Assessment (September 1998).



Hudson Line Corridor looking north along Hudson River



Former Hyde Park Rail Station

Goal: Expand regional mobility

Objectives:

1. Extend Metro-North rail service north of Poughkeepsie to meet current and anticipated increase in demand, while tapping new markets and providing an alternative mode of transportation for northern Dutchess County residents who are not presently served by frequent commuter rail service.

2. Provide a one-seat ride to Grand Central Terminal on Manhattan's East Side for residents of the study area.

3. Determine the northernmost terminus for expanded rail service.

4. Provide new stations in the study area as intermediate stops between Poughkeepsie and the new terminus.

Need: Improve Metro-North's Operating Efficiency

Additional yard capacity is needed on the Hudson Line. Currently, and in order to expand service on the Hudson Line, some trains which originate in Poughkeepsie must be stored overnight in Croton-Harmon (located approximately 40 miles one-way to the south of Poughkeepsie). The trains that are stored in Croton-Harmon must "dead-head", or travel north in nonrevenue service without any passengers, in order to reach the starting point of their revenue-producing trip. This is costly and inefficient. Poughkeepsie Yard is currently close to capacity with few expansion capabilities and inadequate maintenance facilities. Without additional yard capacity, Metro-North will be limited in the amount of service it will be able to add to the Upper Hudson Segment in the future.

Goal: Reduce Metro-North's Operating Expenses

Objectives:

1. Provide a new train storage yard, equipment maintenance area, and employee base facility.

2. Minimize the number of dead-head miles on the Hudson Line.

Need: Compliment Local Economic Development

Transportation access and capacity are vital to the economic development of northern Dutchess County, as ease of commutation from desirable surroundings attracts more people to the County. In 1990, 29,300 Dutchess County residents worked outside the County. Of these, 38% traveled to Westchester County and 13% to New York City. By the year 2020, inter-county commutation by Dutchess County residents is anticipated to grow 60% (12,000) and nearly 41,000 people will travel to work outside of the county. These residents will add to the tax base of Dutchess County as they support local businesses, such as grocers, dry cleaners and other retailers.

Visitors also help support Dutchess County businesses. With more than 325,000 visitors annually, the Mills Mansion in Staatsburg, the Vanderbilt Mansion, and Franklin D. Roosevelt Estate and Library in Hyde Park are three of the most well-visited cultural sites in the Mid-Hudson region. Improvements to regional access will attract more visitors and support this vital sector of the Dutchess County economy. The New York State Department of Economic Development estimated that tourism brought $122 million into Dutchess County during 1991. With a multiplier effect, the Department's estimates are as high as $361 million. This meant jobs for approximately 8,816 Dutchess County residents and a payroll of about $103 million in 1991.

Goal: Support regional/local economic development in the Mid-Hudson Region

Objectives:

1. Improve rail transit access to employment opportunities and commercial areas for residents in the study area through the provision of frequent rail service to New York City and Westchester County.

2. Improve access to cultural attractions through the provision of frequent off-peak and weekend rail service.

3. Support/complement local development plans.

Need: Reduce Traffic Congestion and Improve Air Quality

Congestion on regional roadways is increasing. Highway routes that run parallel to the study corridor carry significantly more traffic than they did a decade ago. Traffic growth on State roads in the county currently averages 2.5% per year. One way to reduce congestion and improve air quality is to introduce an alternative means of transportation which can reduce the number of vehicle miles of travel.

According to the Poughkeepsie–Dutchess County Transportation Council (PDCTC) Draft FFY 2000-2004 Transportation Improvement Program Public Review Summary, the Poughkeepsie metropolitan area, formerly designated as part of the Poughkeepsie (Mid-Hudson) Moderate Nonattainment Area, was determined to have met the one-hour standard for the pollutant ozone by the summer of 1997. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a final rule stating that the area had met the applicable one-hour standard. In mid-1997, the EPA adopted new, stricter standards that lowered the acceptable ozone standard, and instituted a longer duration time measurement (eight hours vs. one hour). The new eight-hour standard is scheduled to go into effect in the year 2000. Although the Poughkeepsie Area has met the old one-hour standard, there is some concern about whether it will meet the new eight-hour standard.

Goal: Improve regional air quality

Objectives:

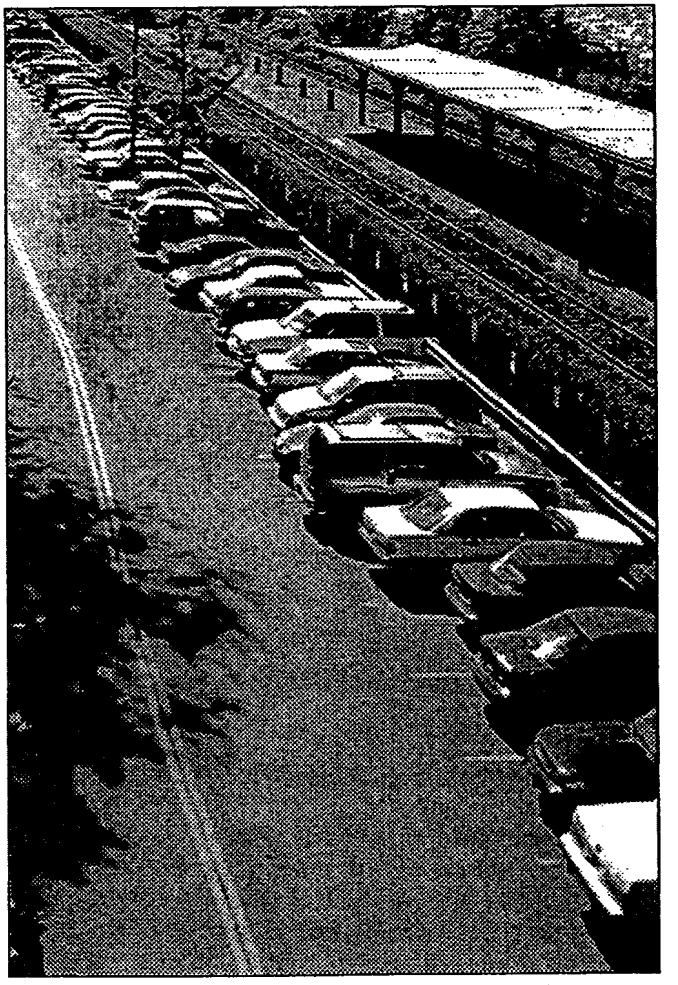
1. Reduce regional pollutant levels by reducing vehicle miles of travel in the study area.

2. Provide rail service options that encourage shifts from single-occupant vehicle travel to rail.

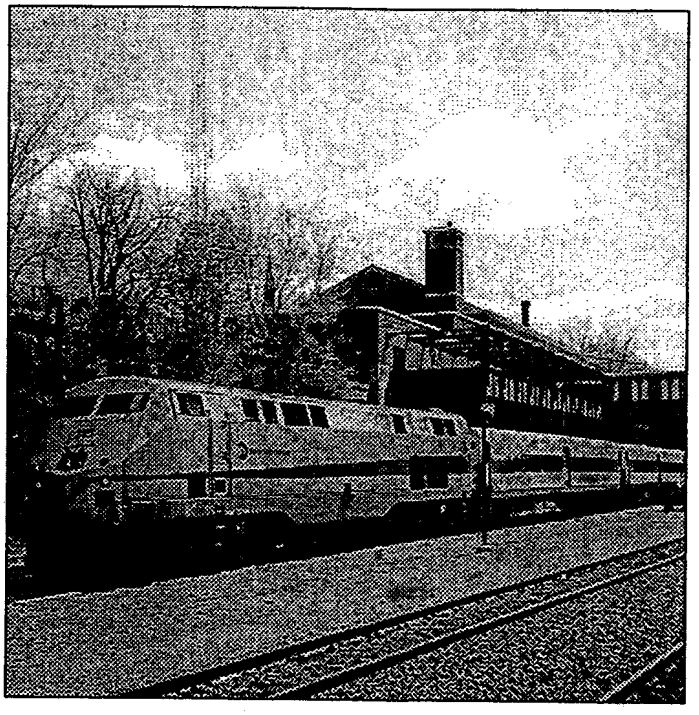
3. Provide improvements that will help achieve provisions of the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 and the State Implementation Plan by reducing the number of vehicle miles of travel.

4. Attract new riders to mass transportation.

The preliminary goals identified above will provide the baseline for evaluating alternatives throughout the course of the Metro-North Hudson Line Extension study. These goals may be



Parking at Rhinecliff Station



Metro-North's current terminus at Poughkeepsie

refined during the public scoping process and the final list of study goals will be contained in the Final Scoping Document and carried forward through the environmental review process. The Final Scoping Document will be a revision of this booklet which further refines the alternatives to be studied, impacts to be analyzed and goals and objectives of the study, based on public and agency comments made during the public scoping process.

Alternatives

This MIS/DEIS will focus on providing commuter rail service on the alignment north of Poughkeepsie in northern Dutchess County and will consider a variety of alternative strategies to meet the goals identified above. The following preliminary alternatives, as well as other reasonable alternatives suggested during the public scoping process, which may include the use of other transportation modes, will be used to develop a comprehensive list of alternatives to be studied in the MIS/DEIS.

Build Alternatives: These alternatives involve the extension of Metro-North passenger service north of the Hudson Line's current terminus in Poughkeepsie. The preliminary proposal includes construction of three or four stations and parking facilities (sites presently under consideration include Hyde Park, Staatsburg, Rhinecliff and Tivoli) with a terminus at Rhinecliff or Tivoli (15 and 25 miles, respectively, from Poughkeepsie). Construction of a train storage yard, an equipment maintenance area, and an employee base facility will also be examined. The utilization of satellite park and ride facilities with shuttle bus service will also be explored for station access. In addition, other reasonable alternatives suggested during the public scoping process will be examined.

No-Build: The current transportation infrastructure of train and bus service, maintenance facilities, highways, and parking facilities, represents the basis for the No-Build Alternative. This alternative includes ongoing, committed and presently funded roadway and transit projects outlined and programmed in the 1998 to 2002 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and the 2000 to 2004 PDCTC Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and other projects funded outside of the TIP process. Programmed transit projects in the study area currently include additions to the City of Poughkeepsie bus fleet and expanded parking at the Poughkeepsie train station.

Transportation Systems Management (TSM) Alternative: The TSM Alternative represents a lower capital-cost approach to meeting the transportation needs in the study area. A TSM Alternative utilizes the existing transportation system infrastructure and may involve low cost capital and administrative improvements that can be implemented more quickly than a Build Alternative. The TSM Alternative provides the baseline against which the cost-effectiveness of major transit capital investments can be evaluated. The TSM Alternative includes all elements of the No-Build Alternative. Elements of the TSM Alternative could include roadway and traffic improvements and improved surface transit services. Mobility on adjacent roadways and existing transit service in the corridor will be evaluated as part of the TSM Alternative.

Regional Relationship

Metro-North seeks to preserve and enhance the quality of life and economic health for the Mid-Hudson region through efficient and effective provision of transportation service. These goals are compatible with the Dutchess County Plan (1987), which supports maintenance and expansion of transit as a means of improving quality of life for all residents.

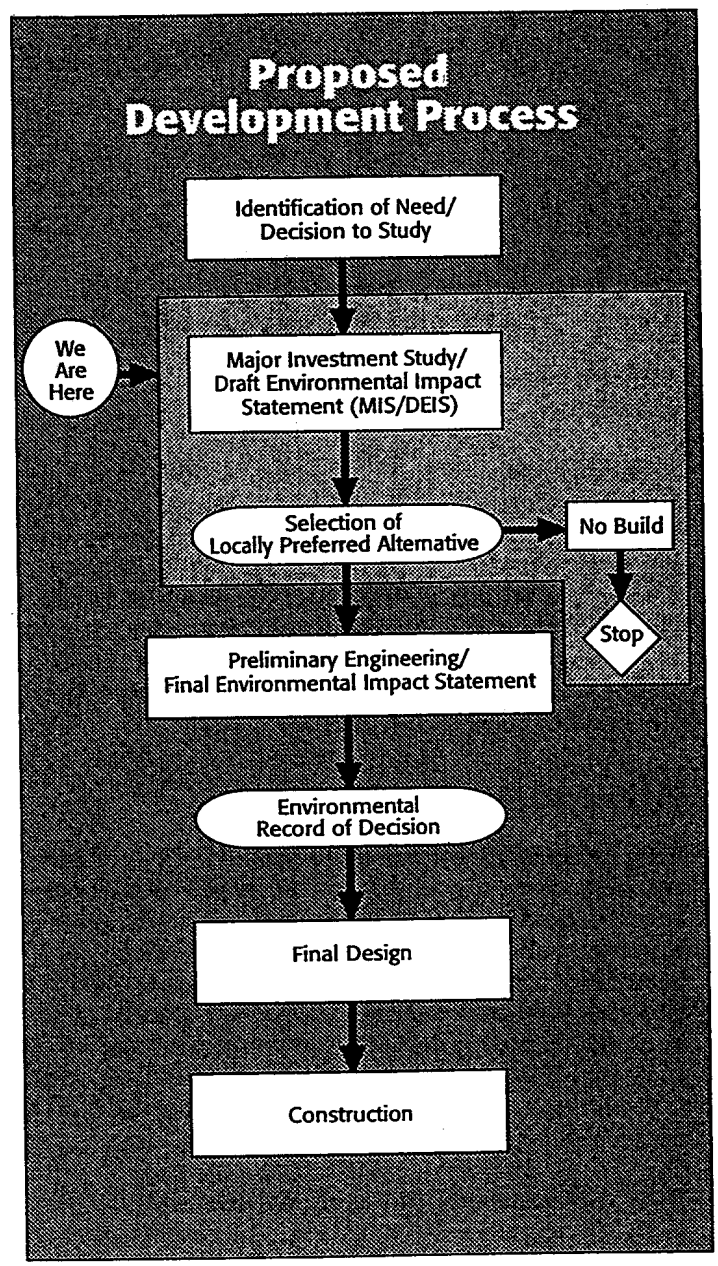
Currently, inter-city train service is provided in the study corridor on the existing rail alignment by Amtrak, which operates 26 trains per day between Albany-Rensselaer and Pennsylvania Station, New York on Manhattan's West Side. Amtrak trains stop in the study corridor at Poughkeepsie and Rhinecliff stations in Dutchess County. Public and private bus companies also serve travelers in the area, making use of the existing highway network.

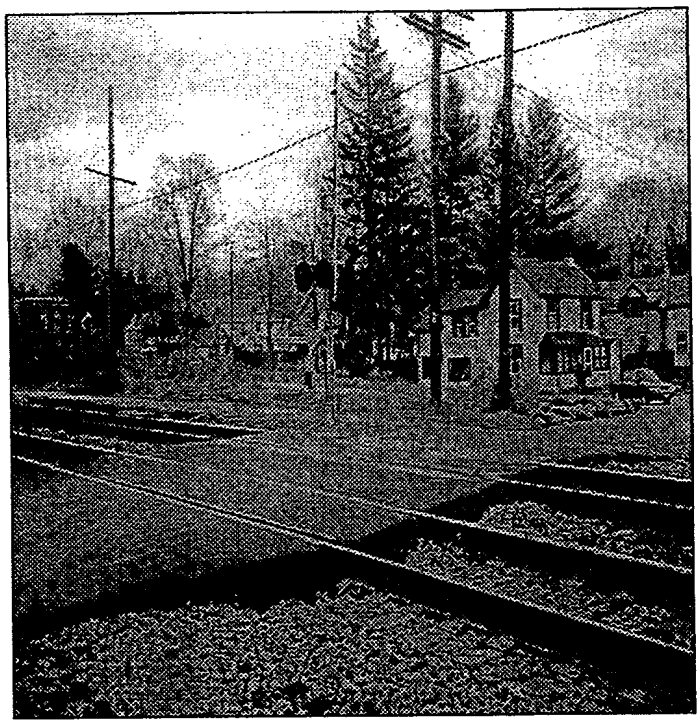
There are other activities underway in support of the improvement of transportation in Dutchess County which may affect planning for the proposed Hudson Line Extension. Construction is underway to extend Metro-North's Harlem line approximately 6 miles north to a location 0.6 miles north of the Hamlet of Wassaic in eastern Dutchess County. The New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) and Amtrak have a high-speed rail initiative on the Northeast Corridor, which will upgrade service throughout the Hudson Line corridor. Metro-North's Penn Station Access Study is evaluating the provision of Metro-North service to Pennsylvania Station, New York, which will provide for commuter connections with Long Island Rail Road, New Jersey Transit, and New York City Transit.

Process

The Hudson Line Extension Study will be prepared as a combined MIS/DEIS. This combined approach streamlines the study and project development process. The Hudson Line Extension MIS/DEIS is being implemented in accordance with local Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) guidelines on Major Investment Studies; the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 as amended and implemented by the Council on Environmental Quality; FTA/FHWA Environmental Impact Regulations; FTA/FHWA Statewide Planning/Metropolitan Planning Regulations; the Historic Preservation Act of 1966 as amended; Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966; the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990; Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice; and all other applicable rules, regulations, Executive Orders and guidance documents.

The planning and project development process, through which federal, state, regional, and local officials plan and make decisions regarding major transit capital investments, contains five basic phases (represented by rectangular boxes in the chart below). As projects are conceived and advanced through the first three phases, technical information is obtained and more clearly defines the design, costs, benefits, and potential environmental impacts. This study will involve a preliminary





Hudson Line Extension Corridor at Staatsburg

screening process in which alternatives that do not meet the needs and goals identified for the study will be eliminated. A detailed environmental review will be performed on the Build, No-Build and TSM Alternatives that remain after screening is performed. An alternative may be eliminated after more detailed environmental impacts are documented.

Upon completion of the more refined analysis and based on environmental considerations and comments received from the public, including comments received on the DEIS, a Locally Preferred Alternative will be selected. If the Locally Preferred Alternative is a "build" alternative, the next phase of project development is to conduct Preliminary Engineering and a final Environmental Impact Statement (PE/FEIS). Once all requirements of the environmental review process have been satisfied, FTA will issue a Record of Decision (ROD). Issuance of a ROD completes the environmental review process. Advancement to subsequent phases would depend on available funding and priorities.

The MIS/DEIS process includes continuous and comprehensive public involvement and agency participation to ensure an open planning process and input from all interested and affected parties.

Analysis of Environmental Impacts

The Hudson Line Extension MIS/DEIS will analyze potential social, economic and environmental impacts associated with the alternatives. Measures to minimize or mitigate potential adverse impacts identified during the analysis will be documented.

Environmental, Social and Economic Impacts

- **Environmental/Physical Impacts**

Air Quality–The relevant State and National Ambient Air Quality Standards will be discussed as they relate to potential emissions generated/reduced as a result of the alternatives. An outline of the potential impact on air quality, as well as a discussion of compliance with the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 and an evaluation of conformity with the State Implementation Plan will be prepared. The extension of Hudson Line rail service will be examined as it relates to a reduction in automobile-related emissions and the number of vehicle miles of travel. The air quality analysis will address two sources of potential impact: 1) increases in CO levels associated with vehicular traffic accessing the new stations, as well as traffic generated by secondary development (microscale); and 2) increased emissions (CO and ozone precursors, HC and NOx) related to extending rail operations (mesoscale). Diesel rail service requires a "warm-up" period in which an increase in emissions could occur. Emission factors have been developed by the EPA based on national averages and on specific engine types. The EPA publication, Procedures for Emissions Inventory Preparation-Vol. IV: Mobile Sources (1992), will be used to define the emissions factors for fuel consumption.

Noise and Vibration–Using FTA's guidance on Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment, April 1995, the study will include an analysis of potential impacts of noise and vibration associated with the TSM and the Build Alternatives.

Flooding–A determination will be made as to whether properties in the study area are located within a 100-year floodplain. Floodplain protection standards will be adhered to. A detailed analysis of potential changes in existing run-off patterns will be developed. Design elements will be recommended to mitigate potential impacts.

Navigable Waters and Coastal Zones–A determination will be made as to whether an alternative is anticipated to be located near or will affect a navigable waterway, or is within the coastal zone. A determination of the applicability of coastal zone policies and plans will be made. Findings will be appropriately documented in the DEIS, and, if applicable, a coastal consistency certification will be sought from the New York State Department of State, Division of Coastal Resources.

Energy–A determination of the amount of energy required to construct and operate each alternative will be performed. The analysis will include availability of utilities/power, estimates of energy expenditures and savings and saving of gasoline resulting from diversion of automobile travel to transit.

Electric and Magnetic Fields–A survey of scientific literature prepared for the U.S. Government's Committee on Interagency Radiation Research and Policy Coordination will be conducted to ensure that exposure to EMFs associated with the alternatives do not pose any health hazards.

Construction Impacts–A description of how project construction may create potential impacts in the following areas will be provided: noise, disruption of utilities, disposal of debris and spoil, water quality and runoff, traffic, air quality and dust control, safety and security, and disruption to business.

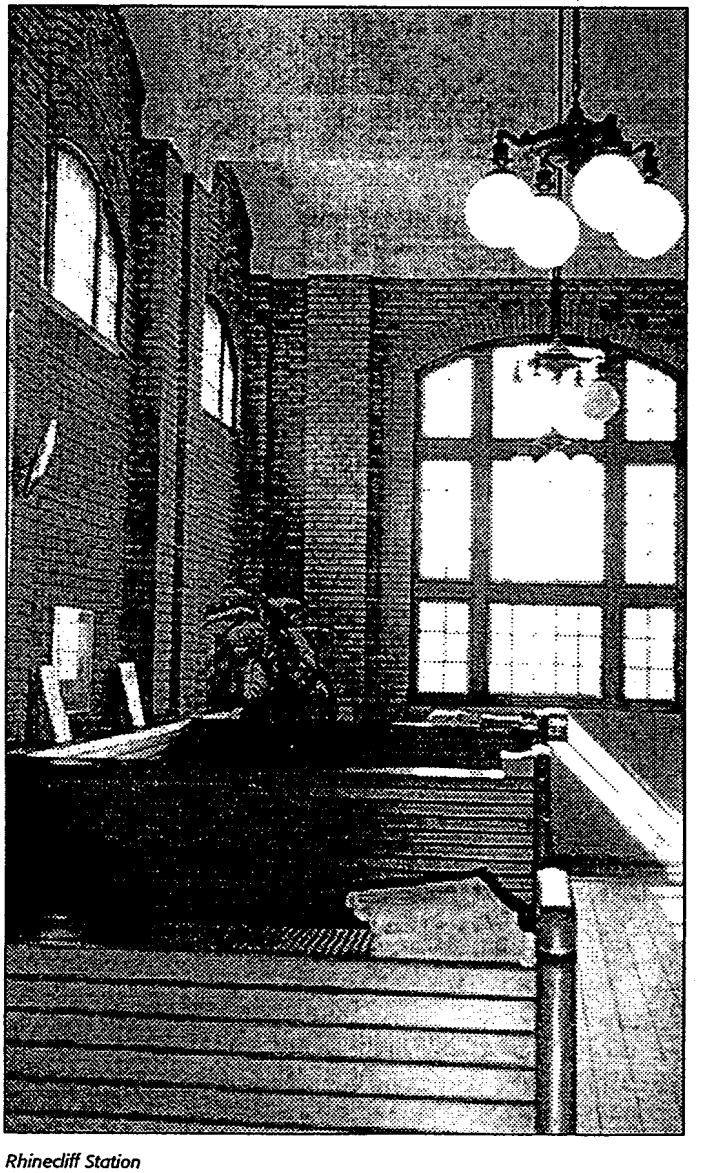
Hazardous Waste–The study will identify the presence of any known hazardous waste or contamination within areas to be affected by construction of each build alternative. For property to be acquired, the study will assess the presence of environmental problems or contamination due to past or current land uses. The study will list the activities of industries and commercial facilities, conduct searches of known contaminated sites, and identify sites requiring further analysis as they relate to the build alternatives.

- **Environmental/Natural Impacts**

Water Quality–An examination of potential direct and indirect introduction of pollutants into the ground and/or surface bodies of water as well as potential alteration of surface drainage patterns will be performed. Potential impacts and mitigation measures will be identified.

Wetlands–This study will indicate the location, delineation, classification and type of wetlands that may be impacted by the alternatives. Both state and federal wetlands associated with the alternatives will be delineated. Measures to avoid or minimize potential impacts will be identified.

Endangered Species–The study will identify and document threatened and endangered species (both fauna and flora) identified by the U.S. Department of the Interior in the Federal Register, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service publications and state agencies pursuant to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Natural Heritage Program.



Rhinecliff Station

Hudson Line Extension at Hyde Park

Ecologically Sensitive Areas–All ecologically sensitive areas within the study corridor such as woodlands, wildlife habitats, marshes, lakes, streams, scenic areas, landforms, bogs, geological formations and pristine natural areas will be identified. An analysis of potential impacts from the alternatives on these areas will be performed.

- **Social and Economic Impacts**

Visual and Aesthetic Impacts–The visual impact of each alternative will be evaluated in terms of its relationship to the surrounding communities. In addition, each alternative will be evaluated based on movement patterns and lines of sight of pedestrians, motorists, and others. Views from surrounding communities will be taken into account, with special attention to sensitively integrating new and old structures.

Historic, Archeological and Cultural Resources–The mid-Hudson region is rich in historic and cultural resources. Historic properties, archeological sites, parklands, and other cultural resources, will be identified, catalogued (and protected) according to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966. Sensitivity models will be created for each proposed alternative, and best efforts will be made to minimize or avoid potential impacts.

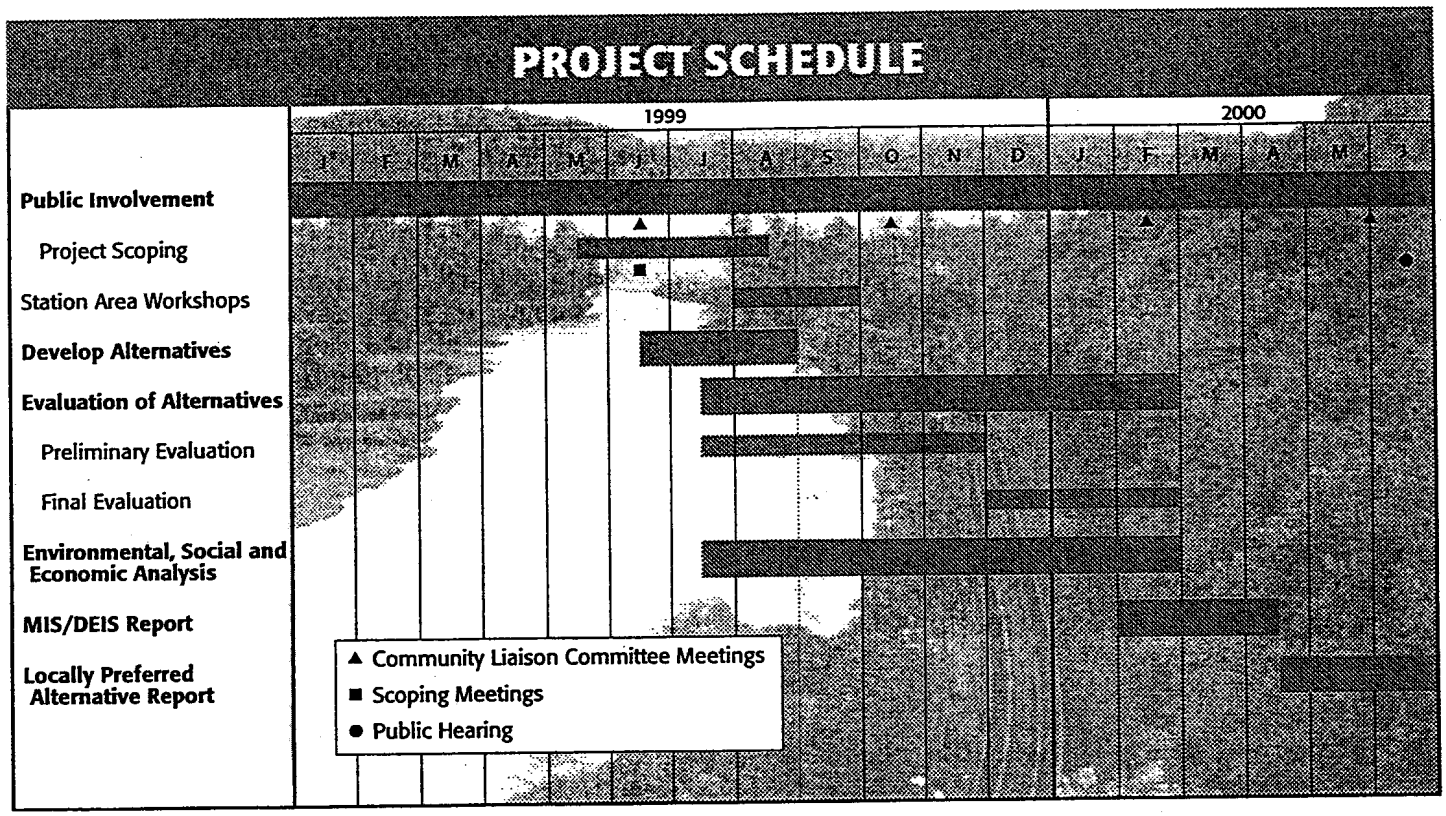
Land Use Plans, Zoning and Economic Development–The study will indicate if the alternatives are consistent with local zoning and land use policy plans as well as local waterfront revitalization plans. Economic and joint development opportunities at station locations will be identified.

Neighborhoods and Community Facilities–Throughout the study, special attention will be directed towards assessing project benefits and impacts on neighborhoods, residences and businesses located near the rail stations. This effort will include the identification of potential changes to land use, economics, population and development trends and impacts on school systems. Impacts on public services such as fire, police, and emergency medical services will be assessed. Recommendations will focus on avoiding disruptions to neighborhoods and will include design elements to protect the fabric of existing neighborhoods around the proposed station areas.

Environmental Justice–Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice calls for documenting any disproportionate impacts to low income and minority populations as a result of a federal action. This study will include this documentation as well as recommend mitigation measures as applicable. Minority and low-income communities will be provided opportunities for participation in the scoping process and throughout the NEPA process.

Land Acquisitions and Displacements–For each alternative, the study will catalogue any properties to be acquired, potential residences and/or businesses to be displaced, and public and private land and facilities that would be needed to construct the project. In all cases, the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policy Act of 1970 will be adhered to.

Secondary Development–The study will identify and quantify development activity in the study corridor that may result from the transportation investment. Special attention will be paid to development potential around station areas. The study will identify and quantify the potential impacts of the proposed alternatives when added to planned and programmed future actions.



Safety and Security–For each alternative, the study will describe the measures that would be taken to provide for safe and secure operation of the alternatives, both during and after construction.

- **Transportation Impacts**

Transit Impacts–The study will evaluate the alternatives with respect to their effects on existing bus and rail service. Areas of focus include ridership, transit operating plans, speeds and travel times, service coordination, transit vehicles, and levels of service.

Traffic Impacts–Alternatives involving new or more intensively utilized existing rail stations may result in increased traffic. A traffic impact analysis will be performed at critical intersections near potential station sites where increases in traffic can be expected. The analysis will look at existing and future levels of service during the peak hours. Future conditions analyses will consider other developments in the project area. If other alternatives impact traffic, appropriate analyses will be performed.

Parking Impacts–The provision of new or additional rail service for the existing station at Rhinecliff and new stations will result in increased demand for parking. Parking resources and needs will be assessed for every alternative. Possible locations for additional parking, including satellite parking facilities which connect to the rail stations by feeder bus service, will be analyzed and identified.

Impacts on Railroad Operations–The study will identify potential operational issues associated with Metro-North, CSX freight, and Amtrak trains utilizing the same alignment. Institutional requirements to operate service within the study corridor will also be identified.

Hudson Line Extension MIS/DEIS Scoping Meeting Times and Locations

Tuesday, June 29, 1999, 7:00 p.m.*

Roosevelt High School Auditorium
Hyde Park Central School District
South Cross Road, Hyde Park, NY

Wednesday, June 30, 1999, 7:00 p.m.*

Rhinebeck Town Hall
80 East Market Street, Rhinebeck, NY

Locations are accessible to the mobility impaired

* Registration to comment will commence at 6:30 p.m. and close at 9:00 p.m.

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